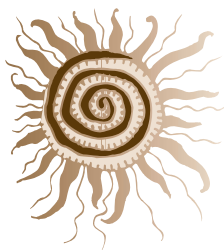


# YOUR Health

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services • Public Health

Volume III; Number 4; Summer 2001

## Protect Yourself Against Skin Cancer



As temperatures rise and days are long and sunny, Angelenos should be aware of their risk for skin cancer, the most common form of cancer in the U.S.

There are two main types of skin cancer: non-melanoma and malignant melanoma. Non-melanoma is the most common type. About 1.3 million Americans are diagnosed with non-melanoma each year. Although malignant melanoma is much less common, it is far more deadly. Malignant melanoma causes about 79% of skin cancer deaths, while making up only 4% of skin cancer cases.

According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), the number of new melanomas diagnosed in the U.S. is increasing. Since 1973 the number of new melanomas diagnosed each year has more

than doubled. The death rate for melanoma has increased by about 44%.

The ACS estimates about 51,400 new melanomas will be diagnosed in the U.S. in 2001. About 7,800 Americans are expected to die of melanomas in the same year.

Summer means more exposure to sun. Protect yourself against skin cancer with these SPF's (Sun Protection Facts) from the ACS:

1. Plan your outdoor activities to avoid the hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are strongest.
2. Always take a hat, protective clothing and plenty of sunscreen when you go out.
3. Sunlight reflects off water, sand, and snow, and can reach below the water's surface.
4. Cloudy skies may make temperatures cooler, but UV rays still come through clouds.
5. Some medications, such as antibiotics, increase your skin's sensitivity to the sun. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about drugs you are taking and take extra precautions.
6. Children need extra protection from the sun. Encourage children to play in the shade, wear protective clothing and apply sunscreen regularly.
7. Sunscreen is not recommended for children less than 6 months old. Keep infants in the shade and covered up with clothing.
8. Always use sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or greater. Look for the number on the label.
9. Apply sunscreen about 20 minutes before going outside to allow it time to bond with your skin. Reapply sunscreen after swimming, perspiring heavily or drying skin with a towel.
10. Don't use sun lamps or tanning booths. A tan won't protect you in the sun; it damages skin.

***It's never too late to protect your skin! Even if you've tanned or burned before, begin protecting your skin today.***

## Free Health Checkups Keep Your Children Healthy and Happy



Even if your child has no obvious illnesses and looks healthy, periodic health exams or “**well-child checkups**” are needed to make sure your child is growing and developing at a normal and healthy pace. Periodic checkups can also find early signs of illness and disease before they become serious problems. From birth to young adulthood, well-child checkups are important to your child's health.

Through a special program, your child (infants to age 21) may be eligible for a free checkup. The Child Health and Disability Prevention Program (CHDP) of the health department helps families prevent health problems before they happen.

### Who is eligible for a free well-child checkup?

- ♦ Children and youth under age 21 who have Medi-Cal health insurance
- ♦ Children and youth under age 19 in low- to moderate-income families who don't have Medi-Cal health insurance
- ♦ Children in Headstart and state preschool programs
- ♦ Children in foster care

**Continued on page 2**

# Free Health Checkups: Continued from page 2

## What does the well-child checkup include?

- ◆ Complete physical exam
- ◆ Teeth and gum check
- ◆ Vision test
- ◆ Hearing test
- ◆ Nutritional check
- ◆ Immunizations (shots)
- ◆ Lab tests
- ◆ Health information.

## What are the benefits of a well-child checkup?

Well-child checkups can help prevent your child from having unnecessary pain, learning troubles, and other health problems. Parents can avoid taking time off from work to take care of a sick child. If health problems are found, the health department helps families get treatment quickly. By treating the problem as soon as possible, the child may avoid disabilities, pain and suffering in the future.



*Even if your child has no obvious illnesses and looks healthy, periodic health exams or “well-child checkups” are needed to make sure your child is growing and developing at a normal and healthy pace.*

*Through a special program, your child (infants to age 21) may be eligible for a free checkup.*

*For information about other free or low-cost health care programs such as Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, California Kids, and others, call the Health and Nutrition Hotline at 877-597-4777.*

## How do I get a well-child checkup for my child?

Call your doctor or clinic and ask to make an appointment for a “CHDP exam” or well-child checkup. For names of doctors who give these exams, **please call 323-890-7941 or 1-800-993-CHDP (1-800-993-2437)** or log on to <http://lapublichealth.org/chdp>.

# What is Public Health?

*The mission of public health is to protect and improve the health of all people. The health department fulfills this mission by:*

- ◆ **Promoting health.**  
Public health professionals promote healthy lifestyles by talking to people at health fairs or handing out information about health risks such as smoking or unsafe sex.
- ◆ **Preventing illness and injury.**  
Public health professionals provide immunizations (shots) and other health measures to prevent health problems.
- ◆ **Enforcing health and safety codes.**  
The health department enforces standards for sanitation and safety in restaurants, housing, businesses, and public places.
- ◆ **Making health care available to all.**  
The health department provides health care services to everyone, including the uninsured. The health department also licenses or certifies health care facilities.



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES  
**Public Health**

- ◆ **Setting local health standards and policies.**  
The health department sets standards and policies that protect and improve the health of local communities.
- ◆ **Keeping our environment clean, healthy and safe.**  
The health department protects the water, air, and other resources from contamination. Public health workers respond to health hazards such as lead, asbestos, and cancer-causing chemicals and monitors the proper disposal of sewage and trash. They also deal with animal problems such as rats, mosquitoes, lice and other pests and vaccinate pets against rabies.

# Protecting Yourself from Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke

***Heat exhaustion occurs when you are working or playing in hot weather and your body cannot sweat enough to cool off... Heat stroke occurs when your body stops sweating but the body temperature continues to rise, often to 105 degrees or higher.***

While millions of Los Angeles County residents race to the beaches and parks to enjoy the summer weather, health officials warn residents that extreme heat (temperatures close to 100 degrees) can cause two serious health conditions. **Heat exhaustion** occurs when you are working or playing in hot weather and your body cannot sweat enough to cool off. Symptoms may include fatigue, weakness, dizziness, headaches, nausea and vomiting as well as cool, clammy, pale, red, or flushed skin.

Heat exhaustion can sometimes lead to **heat stroke**, a medical condition that requires emergency treatment. Heat stroke occurs when your body stops sweating but the body temperature continues to rise, often to 105 degrees or higher. The symptoms include hot, dry and flushed skin; no sweating; high body temperature; rapid heartbeat; confusion; and loss of consciousness. Someone experiencing these symptoms must be cooled immediately in a cold-water bath or wet sheets. Because heat stroke can be fatal, call 9-1-1 for assistance.

**Health officials recommend these precautions during extreme heat to prevent heat exhaustion and heat stroke.**

1. Wear light, loose-fitting clothing.
2. Drink water often; don't wait until you are thirsty.  
If you are urinating less, drink more water.
3. If you become overheated, improve your ventilation. Open a window, or use a fan or air conditioner. This helps sweat to evaporate, which cools the skin.
4. During the hottest times of the day, stay in an air conditioned area. If you don't have air conditioning in your home, visit a shopping mall, park, beach or library to stay cool. If your neighborhood is experiencing a rolling blackout (no electricity), take a cold shower or a dip in the pool to cool your body temperature.
5. Avoid unnecessary physical activity if you are outside or in a building without air conditioning.
6. Avoid sun exposure.
7. When you are in the sun, try to avoid direct sunlight. Wear a hat, preferably with a wide brim.
8. If you take medications, ask your physician if you need to change their use when you are exposed to high temperatures.
9. Never leave infants, children, elderly people or pets unattended in closed cars or other vehicles.
10. If you know seniors or people whose immune and respiratory systems are not working properly or who live alone, check on them regularly to make sure they are staying cool.





# Pool and Water Safety Tips

## Toddlers and Seniors are at Greatest Risk for Drowning

Each year about 100 people drown in Los Angeles County; most drown in their own backyard pool or the pool of a friend or relative.

Drowning is one of the leading causes of death for children under the age of five in Los Angeles County. Last year, 54 persons died from drowning in the county including 14 children under the age of five.

"Most drownings of toddlers occur in backyard swimming pools and spas, but they also occur in bathtubs and buckets of water," said Dr. Jonathan E. Fielding, Director of Public Health and County Health Officer.

Death is not the only result of drowning. For every drowning death, 4 to 10 children come close to drowning. These children may suffer severe and permanent brain damage.

Elderly adults are also at high risk of drowning, again usually in backyard pools. The second most common drowning site for toddlers and elderly adults is the bathtub. Among teenagers and young adults who drown while swimming or boating, many are found to have been drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

***"Most drownings of toddlers occur in backyard swimming pools and spas, but they also occur in bathtubs and buckets of water,"***

*— Dr. Jonathan E. Fielding,  
Director of Public Health  
and County Health Officer*



### Drowning Prevention Tips

"Drowning is almost always preventable," said Billie Weiss, MPH, Director of the County's Injury and Violence Prevention Program.

Please remember to follow these guidelines to prevent drowning:

- ◆ Never leave a child alone around water. Always maintain eye contact with children.
- ◆ Always keep bathroom doors, kitchen cabinet doors and washer and dryer lids closed.
- ◆ Always keep toilet seats down.
- ◆ Never leave water or other liquids in sink, tub, buckets, or containers.
- ◆ Learn CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation).
- ◆ Build a fence between the house and the pool. Fences should have self-latching, self-closing gates. A three-sided fence that uses the wall of the home as the fourth side does not prevent drowning.
- ◆ Don't leave toys in the pool area.
- ◆ Keep a long-handled hook nearby that can be extended to someone in trouble in the water.
- ◆ Keep a telephone in the pool area.
- ◆ If someone is in trouble in the water, yell for help, get the person out of the water, and call 9-1-1 immediately.

***Working with the County Fire Department, the health department is participating in a countywide childhood drowning prevention campaign called W.A.T.C.H. -- Water Awareness Training for Children in the Home. This campaign teaches families about potential dangers in their own homes and how they can stay safe.***

**For more information about the W.A.T.C.H. campaign, call the Injury and Violence Prevention Program at (213) 351-5224.**

### YOUR Health

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